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SOVIET UNION

25X1A¹. Gromyko apparently modifies Soviet position in disarmament talks:

[REDACTED] In response to a strong attack on the Soviet position by French delegate Moch at the disarmament subcommittee meeting, Andrei Gromyko modified the Soviet position by "casually" suggesting that the subcommittee should henceforth take the Soviet proposal of 30 September 1954 as a basis for discussion. Gromyko stressed that the proposal included the terms of the Anglo-French memorandum of 11 June 1954 and claimed that proceeding on this basis would facilitate calling a disarmament conference.

Comment: At the beginning of the talks, Gromyko took a position at variance with the 30 September Soviet proposal, under which other aspects of disarmament would be put into effect before the destruction of atomic stockpiles. The return to the 30 September proposal probably is designed to keep the present talks going so that Moscow will not bear the onus for breaking off the discussions.

Gromyko's prompt response to Moch's rejoinder suggests that Moscow continues to believe that its position on the question of disarmament can be used to influence the French against ratification of the Paris agreements.

25X1A². Molotov's prestige possibly waning:

[REDACTED] The American embassy in London reports that a number of unofficial observers there believe that Soviet foreign minister Molotov's political position is deteriorating, and that he will probably be removed following ratification of the Paris and London accords. The Foreign Office, however, considers the question of Molotov's status to be still "highly speculative."

One British expert on the Soviet Union interprets Bulganin's offer to receive all leaders of foreign delegations in

Moscow as a snub to Molotov. He also notes that a speech made by Molotov on 17 February to a publishing conference was not published in the Soviet press, although speeches of far lesser figures were carried. Finally, this expert points out that the omission of Molotov from the high-level Soviet delegation which traveled to China last October demonstrated that he is 'not indispensable' to the conduct of Soviet foreign policy.

The American embassy in Moscow is inclined to believe that Soviet press treatment of Tito's recent attack on Molotov indicates that there was a difference of opinion in regard to relations with Yugoslavia between Molotov and, presumably, Khrushchev and Bulganin. The embassy suggests that the "slap" at Molotov implicit in the original Soviet publication of Tito's remarks may have been a warning to Molotov against resisting these leaders' views on foreign affairs.

Comment: There is no concrete evidence that Molotov's position has been impaired, but these signs of a decline in his prestige suggest that his status is not secure.

Ambassador Bohlen commented earlier that Molotov's "sullen" and "glacial" appearance on several occasions in November and December suggested that he may have been under fire for miscalculation of the prospects for German rearmament.

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25X1A⁴. Egypt prepared to sponsor military regime in Syria:

Prime Minister Nasr told Ambassador Byroade on 10 March that Egypt had exerted "great effort" to counter Iraq's designs for union with Syria. Nasr said

he was not "sure" the Syrian army was with him and added, "we will have a little Revolutionary Command Council there if trouble really comes."

Nasr indicated he is principally concerned with the isolation of Egypt and the future primacy of Iraq among the Arabs as a result of the Turkish-Iraqi pact. He sees the pact as an Iraqi move to achieve union with Syria. Nasr declared that the new Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi Arabian pact had no military significance and was "entirely political," aimed at preventing Iraq from "grabbing Syria."

Comment: Nasr's statements lend substance to the recently expressed fears of Syrian president Atasi, who believes Egypt is planning to "protect" Syria's present leftist cabinet. Egypt, which has claimed credit for the fall of the previous Syrian government, would probably take steps in this direction if Syrian conservatives, in league with Iraq, attempt the political or military overthrow of Prime Minister Asali. The Cairo government would probably work through Syrian chief of staff Shuqayr, who furnishes the Asali government the military support which maintains it in power.


WESTERN EUROPE

5. Icelandic strikes set for 18 March expected to tie up Reykjavik docks:

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Thirteen Icelandic unions representing 7,300 workers have served notice of their intention to strike on 18 March. According to American Defense Force officials in Iceland, negotiations will continue, but no solution appears likely and the strikes will occur on schedule. The work stoppage, which is expected to last from three to five weeks, will completely tie up the docks in Reykjavik and have the effect of a general strike.

American officials in Iceland believe there may be some sympathetic walkouts at the American-manned base at Keflavik two or three weeks after the initial strikes. An airlift of essential supplies has been requested. 

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Comment: Government action to avert a strike so far has been ineffectual. The unions are under the domination of Communist elements which are directing the concerted campaign for wage increases. The Communists, who together with left-wing Social Democrats now control the Icelandic Federation of Labor, evidently hope to extend their control of the labor movement and to use their influence for political purposes.

